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TAGS: PGOV PREL ASEC HA

SUBJECT: HAITIAN POLICE CHIEF ON U.S. DONATED WEAPONS,  
INSECURITY AND THE CAP HAITIEN COAST GUARD STATION

REF: A. PAP 1279

1B. PAP 1294  
1C. PAP 447

Classified By: Charg d'Affaires Douglas M. Griffiths, reasons 1.4 (B) a  
nd (D)

11. (C) Summary: Haitian National Police (HNP) Director General (DG) Leon Charles told Charg Griffiths on May 9 that he was working to withdraw 21 long-guns donated by the USG in August 2004 from use and hand them over to U.S. custody. He requested, however, to maintain a handful of the weapons in secure HNP storage for HNP Directorate protection. Charles also reported that regular units were responsible for the shooting deaths of four individuals on April 27. CIMO was not active in the area. While encouraged by recent HNP successes in liberating kidnap victims and arresting suspects, he feared the insecurity would continue as long as MINUSTAH failed to establish control in the gang strongholds of Cite Soleil and Bel Air. Charles also agreed to an arrangement allowing shared use of the Haitian Coast Guard (HCG) base in Cap Haitien with CIVPOL. End summary.

12. (C) Following up on a request by DAS Farrar that Charles withdraw from use the long-guns that were distributed to the HNP in August 2003, CDA Griffiths reiterated that it was very important that those arms be secured in USG possession promptly. Charles said that he had already secured 6 of the long-guns (M-14s) and was in the process of turning them over to the Police Academy bunker that is maintained by the USG. Charles explained that the weapons were vital to policing efforts and asked if it were possible to maintain 8 of the arms (Uzis) in the DG Headquarters for personal security purposes. CDA Griffiths acknowledged potential resistance by operational units to hand over their weapons and pledged that the U.S. would soon deliver two armored vehicles to the HNP to assist the affected units. But he maintained that it was imperative that the M-14s be quickly secured in the bunker while the Uzis were secured personally by the DG. He asked Charles to give a full accounting as soon as possible. (Note: Embassy Police Liaison reported on May 12 that 12 of the 13 M-14s were in storage at the DG headquarters awaiting transport to the bunker. The DG said he had accounted for the 8 Uzi's and was waiting for further instructions. End note).

13. (C) CDA Griffiths asked Charles about his knowledge that CIVPOL troops had recently refurbished and occupied the Haitian Coast Guard (HCG) base in Cap Haitien despite plans by the USG to upgrade the station for use by the HCG. Charles said he was told by the Departmental Director for the North and the Coast Guard Director that CIVPOL had a prior agreement with the U.S. Embassy to refurbish and utilize the station for a base and that he accepted the arrangement based on his belief that the U.S. Embassy had already agreed to the deal. CDA Griffiths clarified that the USG had not/not given prior approval to CIVPOL. Charles said that had he known in advance, he would not have supported CIVPOL use of the station, but suggested that given the fact that CIVPOL had already invested in improvements, the important issue was simply to ensure an appropriate work space for the HCG. He added that co-location of CIVPOL and the HCG on the base would have certain benefits in terms of training and oversight. Charles also insisted that the HCG would benefit from the much-improved facilities once the UN leaves Haiti. The Charg said that the USG would consider using funds allocated for base refurbishment to construct additional space for the HCG, which would allow CIVPOL and the HCG to co-locate on the base.

14. (SBU) Charles then gave an updated recount of the incident on April 27 during which four people were killed in the vicinity of a pro-Lavalas demonstration near MINUSTAH headquarters (Note: this new account of the incident is in line with his previous description of events to DAS Farrar on April 29 (ref A). End note). He said that CIMO units were not involved in the shooting. Instead, regular police officers from the Canape Vert and Port-au-Prince stations were pursuing two groups of bandits in the area. Police exchanged

gunfire with one group that had been attacking pedestrians and vehicles near the demonstration, resulting in the deaths of two suspected bandits, while simultaneously another police unit confronted a truck carrying a group that had fired at the Hotel Christopher, killing another two suspects. Charles said that both incidents occurred after the demonstration had already finished. CDA Griffiths stressed that it was important to issue a complete report of the incident. He noted that in the United States police officers were generally moved to desk jobs after being involved in a shooting, pending an investigation.

**15.** (SBU) In response to the recent spate of kidnappings in Port-au-Prince, Charles highlighted the creation of a joint MINUSTAH-HNP Anti-Kidnapping team and operations on May 7-8 by the HNP that succeeded in liberating 3 kidnapping victims and arresting 15 suspects allegedly responsible for many recent kidnappings (ref B). He explained that most of the suspects arrested were ex-prisoners who escaped in the prison break on February 19, (ref C) and were also involved in car theft rings in the city. Charles said that of the roughly 25 kidnappings that had been reported recently to the HNP, 14 of the victims had been held in safe houses located in the Bel Air district of Port-au-Prince where police presence is scarce. (Note: the HNP subsequently arrested several more suspected kidnappers and freed two additional hostages in two separate raids during the night of May 10. End note).

**16.** (C) Charles expressed his impatience, however, with MINUSTAH operations in Cite Soleil and Bel Air. He said that MINUSTAH was still operating on the margins of the neighborhood and had not secured the interior sufficiently to meet the goal of re-establishing a police presence there. The longer MINUSTAH waits to move into the slum and directly confront gang leaders such as Dread Wilme, he said, the worse conditions would become for residents in the area - and for Port-au-Prince in general since many criminals use the slum as a hideout. Charles said that he had reports that Dread Wilme had met with Lavalas leader Gerard Jean-Juste and he feared that the gangs might start committing even more violent actions unless they were captured soon. Charles added that Jean-Juste sent a weekly food shipment to Wilme's area. In response, he said the HNP wants to be more pro-active in Cite Soleil and Bel Air, soliciting the cooperation of residents to root out the bandits. Unfortunately, MINUSTAH had not yet established sufficient stability in either zone. Charles explained that the lack of control in these neighborhoods endangers the entire downtown area as criminals run out of Bel Air shooting, often in the air, then retreat while MINUSTAH fires back from bases near the National Palace. Charles explained that criminals would continue to use kidnapping and armed theft to finance their movement as long as Bel Air and Cite Soleil remain beyond MINUSTAH (and HNP) control. CDA Griffiths promised to continue to pressure MINUSTAH to take the necessary steps to establish control in these areas.

**17.** (C) CDA Griffiths reiterated that conditions in the prisons were unsustainable and that the incarceration of former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune continued to be a major problem. Charles noted that the justice system was responsible for overcrowding at the prisons and said that Neptune was failing to cooperate with overtures to assist him. CDA Griffiths warned that Neptune was trying to be a martyr and that it was imperative that the HNP prison authorities did everything correctly while he remained detained.

**18.** (C) Comment: Post will continue to monitor and enforce compliance by the HNP in retiring the 21 long-guns from operational use. We will also coordinate with INL and CIVPOL on an arrangement for the Cap Haitien Coast Guard base that accommodates the HCG and takes advantage of the benefits co-location with MINUSTAH could bring to the HCG based there. Finally, Charles is correct that MINUSTAH's inability to regain the control of Bel Air it lost following the February 28 shooting incident (not to mention establish a stronger presence in Cite Soleil) aggravates HNP efforts to confront the growing crime and insecurity generated by thugs supposedly operating out of these areas. End comment.

GRIFFITHS